

## Against the Grain

---

Volume 28 | Issue 2

Article 10

---

2016

# Alternatives to Demand-Driven Acquisitions: An Exploration of Opportunity Costs

Carol Joyce Cramer

Wake Forest University, [cramercj@wfu.edu](mailto:cramercj@wfu.edu)

Follow this and additional works at: <https://docs.lib.purdue.edu/atg>



Part of the [Library and Information Science Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Cramer, Carol Joyce (2018) "Alternatives to Demand-Driven Acquisitions: An Exploration of Opportunity Costs," *Against the Grain*: Vol. 28: Iss. 2, Article 10.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7771/2380-176X.7309>

This document has been made available through Purdue e-Pubs, a service of the Purdue University Libraries. Please contact [epubs@purdue.edu](mailto:epubs@purdue.edu) for additional information.

Discoveries like this truly aid in strategic decisions, by facilitating the discussion that informs those decisions. This is a significant way libraries can demonstrate fiscal responsibility and build their case to administration, showing why the institution should not only continue its support, but increase investment in the library.

Aside from widening the amount of content available to our users, the less time subject specialists spend on selecting individual titles, the more time they can spend on faculty outreach and research assistance. I expect the DDA trend to continue and grow, with libraries dedicating larger portions of their budget towards user-selected content.

Recent research is suggesting a trend in general library budget growth. However this reportedly modest increase is not necessarily translating into addition funds for materials.<sup>2</sup> With flat or in some cases decreasing materials budgets, librarians have a responsibility to make conscientious collection management decisions.

Collection development policies may be another area of future growth and change. If libraries have not reviewed these policies recently, this is a perfect time to revisit what we collect and why we collect. On a macro and micro level, there are so many questions to answer. Is our library collecting for posterity? What format do we purchase and why? Do we have a preferred aggregated eBook platform? How much funding should go towards user-driven initiatives? Will these decisions affect our consortia? Do we fulfill faculty format requests if that means duplicating content? The list goes on and on, and I foresee libraries making even more of an effort to focus purchasing of monographic content in ways that align with strategic goals. Revisiting the collection policy, with the greater library community's assistance, will only help to strengthen the story a library tells to administration.

When it comes to the format discussion, the physical book is here to stay. With studies published on exhaustive reading, the correlation between screens and reduced retention,<sup>3</sup> and the often expressed tactile joys of using a physical book, it is impossible for me to see a future entirely empty of them. There is still very much a need and desire for academic book use in its physical form, particularly in the Humanities.

Even so, without question, purchasing of physical scholarly monographs has declined over the past several decades. Studies and surveys<sup>4</sup> have indicated this for quite some time. Anyone using **OCLC Connexion Client** can see this purchasing shift in action. Institutional holdings indicate that eBook titles are on the rise and often surpassing physical book holdings, sometimes by a factor of six over the print. While consortial-level buying data may inflate these numbers (**KSL** does not add holdings for shared purchases), this is nonetheless an important purchasing movement that warrants more discussion.

In physical books, one of my pain points in acquisitions is obtaining out-of-print and hard-to-find material. I expect that buying physical copies of titles published decades ago will be challenging. But in this day and age, why should it be just as hard to buy a book from five years ago? I am not well versed in the expense and gamble publishers take on titles and their print runs, or the business side of what it would take, but I do hope to see more print-on-demand content available. While there is a case to be made regarding general appearance and the integrity of the physical book in its original form, what our users and researchers are truly after is content. They want to absorb that content and synthesize ideas into their own work. Libraries want to provide their users with exactly what they need. Content is a huge driver in what libraries purchase. Sometimes librarians have a say in which format is best for constituents, but not always, since monographs are not necessarily available in the preferred format.

In the past few years, publishers have experimented with eBook pricing and they continue to test the market. Successful business models have emerged that seem sustainable for both publishers and libraries. We are starting to see more of a trend with publisher platforms offering content with less restrictive or even no DRM, and with unlimited user access. Journals have offered unrestricted article downloads and other user-friendly options for years and it is refreshing to see these practices rolled into the world of eBooks. It is what our faculty and students are accustomed to and they have a reasonable expectation to want equitable access in eBooks. Some publishers even go as far as to offer capabilities and assistance with text and data mining projects. These are incredible strides in our industry. Unfortunately these instances, so far, are the exception and not the rule.

In the future, I hope to see more publishers on aggregated platforms allowing for DRM-free chapter downloads, unlimited printing, and simultaneous usage. Is this too much to ask? Maybe. But we are starting to see discussion that open access "may no longer be a pressure point on commercial publishing"<sup>5</sup> on the periodical front. With continued discussion and collaboration, I am optimistic that this could have a residual effect on eBooks.

Why am I optimistic? Because successful open access initiatives are emerging. One such enterprise is **Knowledge Unlatched (KU)**. Established by **Frances Pinter** and first introduced at the **Charleston Conference** in 2010,<sup>6</sup> **KU** harnesses buying power on a global level. It is a way for libraries, publishers, authors, and readers to join forces for the greater good of scholarly achievement through open access. Hundreds of universities in 24 countries participated in the initial pilot, sharing the cost to make 28 frontlist titles from 13 publishers universally available. Pilot assessment findings indicated that titles were downloaded worldwide on average over 1,000 times per week.<sup>7</sup> **KU** has a truly global impact, with library buy-in and interest growing.

*continued on page 21*

---

## Alternatives to Demand-Driven Acquisition: An Exploration of Opportunity Costs

---

by **Carol Joyner Cramer** (Head of Collection Management, Wake Forest University) <cramercj@wfu.edu>

---

If Demand-Driven Acquisition (DDA) dies as an option, or simply no longer meets our needs, what would we do instead?

The **Z. Smith Reynolds Library** at **Wake Forest University** provides an all-you-can-eat smorgasbord for our DDA profile with **EBL**. We currently offer about 170,000 titles. We do not exclude books based on publication date, publisher or subject. We assert that topic areas not covered by our curriculum (e.g., agriculture) will see extremely low use anyway. Therefore, we do not want to waste time pulling those topics out of our pool. On

the other hand, if the occasional agriculture book gets used, then hooray, we have served a user without resorting to ILL. However, we do systematically exclude popular and juvenile works (as those categories are defined by **YBP**) and books with a Short-Term Loan (STL) cost of more than \$200/day. We also de-duplicate against other eBook providers in our collection. However, we de-duplicate against print only in cases where the STL cost exceeds \$76/day.

We can provide such a wide-ranging buffet because we have a healthy book budget and a


relatively small user base, especially in comparison to our budget. In fiscal year 2015, we spent about \$129 per student on monographs in all formats (including DDA). Also, we have fortunately had budget increases that match journal inflation for several years in a row. The **Z. Smith Reynolds Library** serves about 6,200 students, and the total student FTE at **Wake Forest** is about 7,600. Since the DDA model is fundamentally a pay-per-use model, a lower number of potential users most likely equates to a lower total consumption of books.

*continued on page 21*

## Strengthening the Story ... from page 20

There are other ways librarians try to influence the world of academic book buying. There was a discussion on the SERIALIST listserv recently on electronic resources and how libraries handle platforms that require an additional user login beyond IP authentication. When the choice is available, librarians are actively avoiding platforms and providers that require additional hoops for users to jump through. While additional steps may not stop serious researchers, it is a huge deterrent for undergraduates who could easily confuse the extra steps as restricted access. This is a lose-lose-lose situation for the reader, author, publisher, and library.

Librarians don't want to create adversarial relationships with publishers and vendors, but we are aware that our purchases are powerful. Our purchases speak for library user needs as well as for philosophical beliefs. We will continue to navigate the changing landscapes of technology and economics by developing successful strategies driven by measurable evidence.

Librarians are speaking up in a way that is new to the profession. We are telling our story on an administrative level by demonstrating fiscal responsibility and by a concrete, measurable commitment to the university's goals. We share our stories with other librarians and colleagues, building upon best practices, forming partnerships, and making our story stronger. We also want to share our stories with publishers, vendors, and aggregators, explaining the "why" behind individual purchasing decisions and larger purchasing patterns. With continued discussion and collaboration and mutual listening as a first step, together we can build a future that works for everyone in the business of academic books. 

### Endnotes

1. **Church, Stephanie.** "Assessing DDA: Measuring Success for Strategic Objectives." *Case Western Reserve University*. Kelvin Smith Library, October 2015. Web.
2. **Peet, Lisa.** "Gaining Ground Unevenly." *Library Journal* 141.2 (2016): 28. Web.
3. **Jabr, Ferris.** "The Reading Brain in the Digital Age: the Science of Paper versus Screens." *Scientific American* (4 April 2013). Web.
4. "Academic Library Book Purchasing Trends." *Proquest* December 2015. Web.
5. **Bosch, Stephen, and Kittie Henderson.** "Whole Lotta Shakin' Goin' on." *Library Journal* 140.7 (2015): 30-5. Web.
6. "Knowledge Unlatched." *Wikipedia*, 25 February 2016, Web.
7. **Montgomery, Lucy.** "Knowledge Unlatched: A Global Library Consortium Model for Funding Open Access Scholarly Books." *Cultural Science Journal* 7.2 (2014): 1-66.

## Alternatives to DDA ... from page 20

However, the dramatic DDA price increases and publisher embargoes seen since 2014 have led us to ponder — is there a better way? Should we spend our money differently?

I did a thought experiment to explore other ways we could spend our DDA money. I made two fundamental assumptions: (1) our overall buying power will remain unchanged, and (2) the money we are currently not spending on DDA will continue to be spent exactly as it is today — i.e., this is not an opportunity to cut the budget. Notably in our case, our statewide consortium NC LIVE subscribes to **ebrary's** Academic Complete and Public Library Complete on our behalf. Therefore, I did not explore making more investments in the subscription model. For now, I focused solely on cost-per-use and ignored other factors, e.g., user experience factors, that might make a more expensive choice more desirable.

Instead of looking strictly at actual cost-per-use, this thought experiment speculates about what might happen with hypothetical future purchases, based on actual data on user behavior with our existing collection.

*continued on page 22*

## CELEBRATING 95 YEARS OF SCHOLARSHIP



**MLA**  
International Bibliography

The *MLA International Bibliography*, the gold standard for research in the humanities, is the most authoritative and comprehensive resource for scholars and students who need information on modern languages, literatures, folklore, film, and linguistics.

Truly international in scope, the *MLA Bibliography* includes citations to more than 2.7 million print and electronic publications and Web sites in over 100 languages. Easy access to full-text collections is available through link resolvers, DOIs, and direct links to JSTOR, Project MUSE, and ProQuest Dissertations and Theses.



Our video tutorials at [www.mla.org/bibtutorials](http://www.mla.org/bibtutorials) show easy tips for using the *MLA Bibliography*. Subscribe on **YouTube!**

To suggest a video tutorial topic contact us at [bibliography@mla.org](mailto:bibliography@mla.org).

Find us on 

Join the conversation about the *MLA International Bibliography* on Facebook @ [MLABibliography](https://www.facebook.com/MLABibliography)

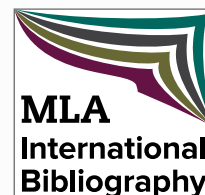
Use the *MLA International Bibliography* to enhance your ORCID profile at [biblink.mla.org](http://biblink.mla.org)

### TO SUBSCRIBE, PLEASE CONTACT

EBSCO Publishing	Gale Cengage Learning
800 653-2726	800 877-4253
<a href="http://www.ebscohost.com">www.ebscohost.com</a>	<a href="http://www.gale.cengage.com">www.gale.cengage.com</a>

ProQuest  
800 521-0600  
[www.proquest.com](http://www.proquest.com)

Modern Language Association  
[bibliography@mla.org](mailto:bibliography@mla.org)  
[www.mla.org](http://www.mla.org)



## Alternatives to DDA ... from page 21

I calculated a hypothetical cost-per-use for four different scenarios. My conclusions were:

1. DDA (control — actual data): 170,000 books; \$10.58/use (COUNTER BR1) or \$28.27/STL
2. Buy More Print: 4,434 additional books; \$52.71/use
3. Package Purchase: 4,052 books; \$97.31/use
4. Evidence-Based Acquisition (EBA): Close to print

### Buy More Print

To determine an approximate cost-per-use for our existing print collection, I focused on the books purchased in fiscal year 2011. These books have had almost five full years to reach a user. The average use is 1.15 times per book, and the five-year cost-per-use came to \$39.40.

To project forward the cost-per-use of buying more print, I assume that the extra books bought would have lower use because we buy the most-needed books already (e.g., we already purchase almost every book directly requested by a user). We also might assume that the additional books would have a higher per-unit cost because selectors would choose more expensive books if they had more money to spend. In fiscal year 2015, the average print book purchased by my library cost \$47.49. I predicted that the average cost of buying additional print books would be \$52.71 and the five-year use would drop down to 1.00 per title. (This is perhaps a trifle optimistic.) These projections, if correct, would yield a cost-per-use of \$52.71 for about 4,434 print books.

## eBook Packages

To continue the thought experiment, I took actual price quotes for eBook packages received from two major players in the academic market and compared them to local use of DDA books offered by the same providers. The two price quotes I received had radically different per-book costs. I determined that for one smaller (and cheaper) provider, we could buy the whole package for a given year. We would then have money left over to cherry-pick some relevant subject packages offered by the larger publisher. However, based on our DDA statistics, I would expect at most that only about 30% of the titles would get used within five years. I concluded that we could buy 4,202 titles using this method, but our cost-per-use after five years would be a whopping \$97.31 across the two collections.

### Evidence-Based Acquisition

The basic premise underlying EBA has been outlined in these pages before.<sup>1</sup> Once the ex-



periment have a lower cost-per-use compared to print, as long as the library's choice of publisher partners fits well with user demand. I did not calculate a projected cost-per-use for EBA, since there are so many unknown variables. Given our small user base, I have serious concerns about whether enough books from a single publisher would get used to make the EBA model a good choice. Should we ever enter negotiations to purchase an EBA plan, I hope the publishers would grant the smaller schools a lower required purchase amount to account for these concerns.

I also considered the penetration rate of various publishers (what percentage of their titles was used) vs. the absolute number of titles used. If we choose to buy a publisher package, I would target a publisher with the highest possible penetration, since we would pay for every title regardless of use. With an EBA model, however, we can accept a lower penetration as long as the total number of titles used was higher.

Table 1

Publisher	Titles in WFU DDA pool	Usage	Use rate/Penetration
Major commercial publisher	36,952	3,729	10%
Large academic publisher	1,836	619	34%

periment access period ends, the library buys the chosen books at list price. If the eBook price mirrors print pricing, the total number of books acquired would be substantially similar to the number acquired in print. However, books acquired under the EBA model should

Imagine that I wanted to commit \$20,000 to either a single EBA plan or a package purchase. Table 1 is extrapolated from actual DDA statistics at my institution. If I wanted to pursue an EBA plan, I should consider work-

*continued on page 23*

## What's Next for Academic Publishing?

by **Alan Jarvis** (Publishing Director, Taylor & Francis Books) <alan.jarvis@tandf.co.uk>

I recently spoke to an old friend and colleague now working at a rival publisher who said that their organization had undergone more change in the last two years than it had in the previous two hundred. A sentiment that may be difficult to verify but is indicative of a rate of change most in the industry are finding challenging.

This is manifested at both a macro and a micro level. Whilst publishers puzzle over "big picture" issues such as the impact and trajectory of things like Open Access, MOOCs, the for-profit educators, and the never-ending shift in library budgets away from books towards STM journals, on a micro level they also have to rethink their approach to deciding whether individual book projects are worth pursuing.

At the **Charleston Library Conference** I was asked how a commercial publisher can evaluate whether a monograph will be financially viable under current highly uncertain market conditions. Historically this would just be a case of comparing costs (fairly predictable) with anticipated revenues, determined by sales which, with the aid of approval plans, would also be fairly predictable.

The basics of this equation — revenues minus costs — remain the same, but the details have become much

more complex. Sales revenue might now be generated from the printed hardback book, a subsequent print on demand paperback, the eBook and from eBook rentals. It is not clear how any of these components is going to behave, or even what the split between the different parts is going to be. Perhaps the only predictable thing is that total revenue from sales in all formats is likely to be lower than what it used to be from a single hardback version. Costs associated with electronic sales ought to be lower, since you are no longer paying for printing, paper and binding or for storing and distributing physical copies. But this saving is offset by investment in platforms for selling eBooks, and can be negated entirely if the publisher has anticipated, and printed for, more hard copy sales. Many other costs have been largely unaffected by the digital revolution (for example, human inputs like copy editing or the costs of peer review). The underlying feeling, therefore, at macro and at micro level, is of sailing in uncharted waters.

What does a scholarly publisher do in the face of rapid change, with conflicting priorities, and where budgets in core library markets are flat or declining? What is next for academic publishing is some combination of developments along existing trajectories, changes which are significant in

*continued on page 23*





## Alternatives to DDA ... from page 22

ing with the major commercial publisher. Their title list is so large that I would almost certainly have \$20,000 worth of worthwhile purchases with use by the end of the access period. On the other hand, if I want to pursue the package model, I would be better off pursuing a deal with the academic publisher that has seen deeper use.

Once, near the end of the fiscal year, I sent our selectors a list of DDA books that had seen use, but had not yet been triggered for purchase. I did not mandate that the selectors take any particular action, but many of them who had money left in their monograph funds chose to firm-order the eBook. Others chose to firm-order the print. Can EBA work like this? As long as many patrons still express a strong preference for print, we could use temporary e-access to indicate which specific titles are needed and then purchase print. We could even make a dual-format purchase in cases of highest demand.

So in summary, even with the recent price increases, DDA remains by far the most cost-efficient model for an institution like ours. If the DDA model ceased to exist (or if further price increases undid this cost efficiency), then my institution should probably consider re-directing our DDA fund toward a combination of print and EBA instead of pursuing package purchases. Institutions with a different budget profile and especially with a larger user base would probably reach very different conclusions. I can use the information I gathered to determine at what cost-per-use threshold I should consider dropping my DDA plan in favor of an alternative. Likewise, I can now identify my second choice in case the DDA option ceases to exist. 🌧

### Endnotes

1. **Levine-Clark, Michael.** "Evidence-Based Selection at the University of Denver," *Against the Grain* 27, no. 5 (November 2015): 18-20.



# RESULTS Search ENGINE

## Real Results

Not available  
anywhere else

## Real Relevant

Easily explore full text  
documents, NIH grants,  
patents and more

## Real Fast

Exactly what you  
need right away

**Quetzal**

- ☐ **Regulation of injury-induced neurogenesis by nitric oxide.**  
Carreira BP (University of Coimbra)  
**Stem Cells Int** (2012) [Show Abstract »](#)  
Nitric oxide-releasing compounds are clinically used for the treatment of patients with coronary heart disease.  
[More Relevant Statements »](#)
- ☐ **Endothelial SR-BI and Metabolic Health**  
Mineo Chieko (UT Southwestern Medical Center)  
**NIH Grant 1R01HL126795-01** (2015) [Show Abstract »](#)  
Roles of HDL, PDZK1 and NO will be determined by loss- and gain-of-function strategies using mouse models.  
[More Relevant Statements »](#)

**compared to**

**Google** The cardiovascular health study: design and rationale  
LP Fried, NO Borhani, P Enright, CD Furberg  
Act of 2001, Pub. L. No. 107-110, § 115

**PubMed** No items found.

Just say YES to Quetzal

Contact us: [info@quertle.com](mailto:info@quertle.com)

Check us out: [Quetzal-Search.info](http://Quetzal-Search.info)

Schedule a free trial today.  
Free training and support.  
Money back guarantee!

**Quetzal**  
By **Quertle**

PubMed® is a registered trademark of U.S. National Library of Medicine. Google Scholar® is a registered trademark of Google, Inc.

## What's Next for Academic Publishing? from page 22

themselves but leave much untouched, and changes that might amount to a paradigm shift.

### Developments Along Existing Trajectories

**Publish more** — Come what may, growth in published scholarly output is likely to continue. The number of universities, libraries, scholars, and students continues to increase, especially in emerging markets, and administrative and institutional exercises like the UK's Research Excellence Framework also create more pressure on scholars to publish. For **Routledge**, publishing more books is the consequence of

decisions taken some time ago, when we chose to add to our strength in established areas by pursuing new and emerging areas. As a result we have editors in areas like gender studies, environment and sustainability, and tourism, alongside editors in traditional subjects like philosophy and economics. Growth in output is also a reflection of the globalization of academic research in English. This means that publishing more does not mean lowering the quality threshold, since we are not just taking more fish from the same geographic pond. In our case growth in title output is also driven by the acquisition of other publishers and imprints.

**Consolidation** — Faced with declining revenues and the need to invest in digital infrastructure to compete, many small and medium-sized publishers are choosing to sell up. At the same time larger publishers

*continued on page 24*